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ROSES

*and* RAIN

*ANNIE LAURIE*







# ROSES · *and* · RAIN

*by*

ANNIE · LAURIE *— pseud. —*

*Black, Mrs. Winifred (Sweet), 1869-1936.*



ANNIE LAURIE SERIES

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The sketches in this little book are reprinted by the courtesy and kindness of the San Francisco Examiner.

Let's sit down together and think again of the roses and rain, the sunshine and fog, the wild wind and deep peace, the joyous beauty and proud generosity that is—California.

Annie Laurie



## ROSES AND RAIN.

Last night we sat in the quiet room—a few friends together—and heard the wind rattling the palm leaves outside in the garden, like some ghostly *senorita* clicking a pair of invisible castanets in tune to some haunting rhythm.

The fire burned on the hearth, a fire of eucalyptus logs, with now and then a branch of aromatic leaves, flaming suddenly into leaping life and filling the room with their pungent and somehow exotic perfume.

We put out the bright lights from the center of the room, and let the shadows fall from the little gleaming lamps that are like fire-flies, flitting in the dusk like so many swiftly passing thoughts and pleasant memories.

There we were, the young couple so dead in love with each other, and so full of the joy of living. Sweet Sixteen, a little terrified at her vague glimpse of life—Twenty-one, virile and modest and somehow eagerly hopeful.

The Home Woman, the Woman of the World, the Artist, the Genius, the Singer and the Priest. A strange company, strangely mixed, and yet

there we sat in the quiet little room—together, like passengers on a raft picked up from the wild sea and held together by some strange accident of fate.

We talked, not of politics, not of war or of diplomacy—not even of the high cost of living, or of the effect of the vote upon women.

We talked of books and poetry, and of music, and one told a quaint little story of a wounded pigeon, and the rescue of it, and the fire burned and the wind sang, and gradually the stress of the world and the anxiety and restless, uneasy ambition of it fell from us like an outworn cloak. And there we were, like little children, talking together in the twilight of some great primeval forest.

And one sang—a simple song of love and memory and tears.

“Roses and rain” and the artist smiled, and the Woman of the World sighed, and there were tears in the eyes of the Home Woman.

The Genius it was who sang—and the Singer sat by the fire and listened.

The Young Wife’s hand stole to the hand of

her Husband, and the Priest sat like one in a deep reverie. Was he thinking of the roses that bloomed in the dooryard of his home across the sea, and the fragrance of them in the sweet June rain?

And we didn't care who was elected or who was defeated, and somewhere, far down in the city below, the boys were calling extras, extra—extra—all about something or other very important, which concerned us not in the very least.

And the Singer was generous, and poured out for us like a libation on the altar of friendship his voice of molten silver—French songs he sang full of the quick and glancing grace of a fountain leaping in the moonlight. German lieder, simple and brooding, like the lullabies a mother sings to her child. Italian, too, he sang, and the room glowed with the fire and the passion of the melting music of Italy.

“Eileen Allana”—how he sang it—the simple old ballad, and how we drank every lilting note of it, like thirsty travelers in a dry and arid desert.

And so the quiet evening spent itself, and at the end she sang again, the woman with the

strange dark eyes—"Roses and Rain"—and we were one with the sunshine and the dew and knew again the sweet and rapturous pang of youth and moonlight and the mystery of the stars.

"Roses and Rain"—the wind in the palm trees, the fire on the hearth, dear faces in the soft dimness of the quiet room. What is there sweeter, what more beautiful, what more to be gained in life than these?

## COME HOME, CARELESS LOVE.

“Come home, Careless Love—oh, do come home!  
I’ll weep like a willow, and I’ll mourn like a  
dove.

Come home, Careless Love—oh, do come home.”

Careless Love has gone—far and far he flew out of the garden, over the wall, past the great eucalyptus, up and up, higher and higher, his wings flashed in the sun, he turned toward the shining water, and like a flash he was gone.

And in the cage that stands on the garden wall his mate sits on the perch and mourns for him—“Poo-roo,” she says, “Poo-roo,” and will not be comforted—no, not by rice, or by corn, or even by wheat, no matter how daintily it is scattered.

“Poo-roo—Poo-roo,” and what is there on earth that can mourn so musically as a ring dove mourning for her mate?

There were four of them the other day. We brought them home from the great, broad acres in the warm country.

They lived in a netted enclosure, just back of the chicken yard—the mourning doves and the pouter pigeons and the fan-tails. And how they

did strut and preen and turn their glossy necks from side to side to catch every angle of the sunlight. They were named—the most of them. It was a little cruel perhaps to call the pouter pigeon “J. Hamilton Lewis”—and whoever named that gray little dove “Mrs. Pankhurst”? We stood in the shade and watched them for hours, the pretty, graceful, gracious creatures. And when we went away the generous giver of a generous day loaded us down with presents and in one package was a box and in that box were the four doves.

“Dinna ye mind the cushat dooes at Inverquarity?” That was the message she sent to her old sweetheart, the poor woman dying in cruel London, far away from her girlhood’s home.

“Dinna ye mind the cushat dooes Aaron Latta?” and Aaron Latta minded and came up to London and took the forlorn children the dying woman left behind her and gave them a home, all because of the woman who had stood with him on a fairing day and listened to the mourning of the cushat doves.

I thought of her all the way home, the poor woman who died in London, and of the faithful



sweetheart who came to help her when she minded him of the mourning doves—pretty things, pretty, graceful, gentle things. We made them a little house out of a great box and set them high upon the wall in the scarlet and green of the geraniums.

And one we named "Careless Love" and one we named "Poor Soul" and one we called, oh, the light-mindedness of youth in these strange days of ours—"Oo-Long," and the other "So-Long."

And we scattered grain and set clear, cool water and went into the house and planned the building of an old world dove-cote high on a tall pole, with little doors and windows—a door for "Poor Soul" and one for "Careless Love" and one for "Oo-Long" and one for "So-Long." And then we all went to sleep and dreamed of carrier doves and sweet messages sent from far seas. But in the morning when we went to feed the little visitors, one of them edged close to the door, and, wh-rrr, before you could catch your breath, he was gone.

He lit for a moment in the weeping willow tree, stopped an instant to catch bearings and

then as straight as an arrow, away he went across the bay, in the exact direction of the broad acres from which he came.

I'm expecting every minute to hear from the generous giver, he who gathers forlorn children around him and protects them and makes them happy—I wonder if they will recognize "Careless Love," the little city boys out there in the country for their vacation, and bid him welcome, and put him back in the enclosure with "J. Hamilton Lewis" and "Mrs. Pankhurst"?

And will "Careless Love" be a great hero, returned from the wars, and will he tell them fine tales of his wild adventures, and will he mourn for "Poor Soul," or will he find another mate and forget all about her?

And now what to do about "Oo-Long" and "So-Long?" Shall we dare to build the dove-cote and put them in it? Will they stay with us if we do, or will they rise high in the air and strike a straight course over to "Careless Love" and the pouter pigeon and the fan-tails?

We would take such good care of them, if only they would stay with us. They should have the

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whole world to fly in by day, if only they would come back at night, and in the morning, and at twilight, mourn just a little for us over the sorrows of the world and ease by their music the aching of some lonely heart.

Must we shut them in some hateful enclosure—just to protect them from the wild beasts and the dangers of their little world, or—

Now, I know the meaning of the expression in the eyes of the little mother who cannot make up her mind whether to keep her daughter “safe” and caged at home or let her seek freedom—and peril—abroad.

“Come home, Careless Love—oh, do come home.” “Poor Soul” is watching for you.

## UP THE SAN JOAQUIN.

The Harvest Moon—how big and round and red it is when it first rises—and how it floods the dull, old, everyday world with silver when it is high in the sky!

Where have you seen it this time?

Out at the Beach—with the great waves rolling in and rolling in—looking like rows and rows of prancing horses tossing their white manes for the very joy of living? In the Park, with the tall eucalyptus throwing their ragged shadows on the ground like beggars playing dice against time and laughing in the wind to lose their stakes? Out at Land's End, with the light darting across from the Light House as an inspiration flashes upon the brain and the dark hills of Marin shouldering up as if some jealous giant had built him a fortress to shut out even the envious glances of a wistful world?

I saw my Harvest Moon up the San Joaquin—what a country! Have you been there of late?

I hadn't—and I thought of it as a kind of low, level stretch of flat country, with nothing much to relieve the monotony save the silver river creep-

ing in and out among the shadows. But, dear me, they've been doing things in the San Joaquin—big things, I suppose—but what I noticed most were the fields and fields and fields of ripening melons—millions of them, striped and russet and fragrant. Why, you could feed an army on melons and never even touch the San Joaquin crop. And the figs—orchards of the great, broad, generous trees that always make me think of an old-fashioned grandmother with plenty of room in her capacious lap for all the grandchildren and a few of the neighbors' children too. How beneficent and kindly they are—the fig trees laden to the ground with their rich harvest. Olives, too, and late peaches. The air is heavy with the richness and the sweetness and the promise of the ripe fruit. Talk about the Garden of Eden—if Adam had ever seen California in September or early October he wouldn't have cared a cent about that flaming sword—not if he could have found an airship to get down here—not he.

And as for Eve—what a country for a woman it is—Cailifornia. Not too clear, the beckoning

distances; not too sharp the outlines—curved, gracious, gentle, smiling—so are the quiet hills dressed in their autumn yellow.

And, oh, the fields of the San Joaquin! Whatever is that little, waving, yellow blossom there—that holds up its gay head so late in the year, as if it were the Spring and all the birds were mating? The fields themselves are primrose colored—so delicate they are. But the miles and miles of waving flowers are almost orange—and there's a rich perfume about them like mandrakes ripening in the sun. What can they be?

And then the miles of vivid blue—who are they?—the wistful strangers who have taken possession of the rich lands near the river, now that the crops are over—blue and blue—the deep, clear blue of sapphires. They have a poignant, heavy flavor in their haunting perfume—something that is like the bouquet of a fine, old white wine. And what is that pungent, aromatic scent that haunts the air like a spirit? Why, it's mint—wild mint all along the river bank, growing under the willows and the quaking aspens.

Look! There's a storm breaking somewhere. See how the sun draws water, and how red the angry clouds rise upon the horizon! What's that in the distance? Snow, and plenty of it—on the peaks—you can feel the tang of it in the air.

Look! There she rises—the Harvest Moon—serene, generous—a queen among moons, smiling, well-content.

Come, come—not so matronly, Madame Moon, if you please. We know you love the perfume of the harvest fields, and we rejoice with you at the abundance of the garnered vintages.

But we look to you for romance, for fancy—for a magic veil of silver to soften the rough edges of a too practical world.

Ah! it smiles again, the argent mystery of the moonlight—and all the rustling night is silver and amethyst—and far and far a dog barks, and some sheep fold stirs, and even the cattle feel the spell of it, and move restlessly in their accustomed places.

What the river, the Stanislaus—the fork of it for the mountain climb? What is it he said—the poet—of some one who breasted high water

and swam the North Fork and all, just to dance with old Follansby's daughter, the "Lily of Poverty Flat"? Ah, well, no wonder he swam the North Fork—who wouldn't want to dance in such a country under such a moon as this?



## THE DANCING FIRE.

The other evening it was chilly. A great cloud rolled up from the west and there was rain, and right in the midst of summer sturdy autumn thrust his head in at the window and laughed to see us shiver.

And I sent the children out for some wood and we built a fire in the fireplace and made a great pitcher of chocolate and had some thin bread and butter and little cakes, and we sat by the fire and laughed and sang and told stories. Old stories, about witches and ghosts and goblins and where the wood came from that we burned.

Pine, from great forests in the high Sierras, where the snow falls and the wind howls all winter, tamaracks from the swamps near the sea, and redwood from the great groves that are like cathedrals.

Applewood from the old trees in some half-forgotten orchard. Who planted it, I wonder—the bride or the groom? The orchard grew close to the door on the old place, there in the hills. A branch of willow—did this come from “Haunted Pond,” where the old-fashioned water lilies grow

and where it is so still and mysterious at twilight?

Eucalyptus—ah, there's California for you—Oregon, Georgia, Maine—what a storehouse of memories an old wood box can sometimes be!

Of mermaids we talked, and sprites and pixies, and gnomes and the little folk of Ireland, and brownies and the tree people, who live in the trunks of trees, and elves and fairies, and wishing rings and traveling carpets, and invisible cloaks—don't you know the kind you put on when you want to walk abroad and not let any one see you?—and wishbones and magic wells. Oh, we had a lovely time, sitting in the twilight by the light of a dancing fire!

And suddenly one of our number laughed aloud, and then she caught her breath and sighed.

"Look!" she said. "Out of the window!" We looked, and there, reflected on the clear pane, was the dancing fire, brighter, wilder, more leaping than the one on the hearth.

"When fire outside burns merrily, there the witches are making tea," she quoted.

And we laughed and looked and wondered.

It was so real with its dancing flames—so full of life and vitality, it didn't seem possible that it was nothing but a reflection. Was that some one standing beside it, smiling through the window at us, with, oh, that unforgotten smile?

Proud head, rosy cheeks, clear eyes, and, oh, the honest, boyish love in them. Did they see it, the others who looked with me?

No, no; that vision was for me alone.

For an instant it paused, turned, smiled, and with love and yearning tenderness in every gesture looked back and was gone.

How he used to love to see the fire burning outside in the cool night—he loved the fire on the hearth, too, but he would leave it any time to stand and watch the gay reflection that was like some vagrant spirit, leaping, calling, beckoning him—whither?

And now he is gone and does not sit with us by the fire and cannot tell the quaint stories that he loved. But, perhaps—is it possible, I wonder—that when the fire leaps upon the hearth of his old home, he is permitted for an instant to come

and stand by the phantom flames that intrigued his imagination so deeply, and smile and look in upon us for just an instant?

How can we know? How shall we ever know?

Fragrant pine, clear flames of redwood, strange incense of the eucalyptus—ah, call him back again just for one sweet moment!

So you wait outside the door, do you, bluff Sir Autumn, with your followers in red and gold, the heaped vintage of your harvest purple and yellow and crimson—you bring chill and frost and brown quiet for all the growing things. But, oh, you bring, too, the dancing fire!

And so, with warm hearts, we will welcome you when it is your time to come.

## PASSIN' THROUGH.

He's out in the garden—this very minute—the Mysterious Stranger.

Night before last I heard him just at sunset calling from the top of the tallest eucalyptus tree in the neighborhood.

"Happy days," he cried, "happy, happy, happy d-a-y-s!"

I went out on the porch with the opera glass and tried my best to see him—did he notice me, and was he laughing to think of a being so dull of the senses that such a thing as an opera glass was necessary anywhere, any time?

He sounded as if he did, for there was a distinct chuckle at the end of the next "happy," and something like a friendly giggle in the "days."

I watched and watched, and the eucalyptus tree turned from electric blue to dull green in the changing light of the sunset hour and then to deep and melancholy purple, and then almost to black with a fringe of silver along the edges, and the Mysterious Stranger laughed and called and sang and hurraed and cheered and sighed and almost sobbed—and then was silent.

But never once could I catch the faintest glimpse of him.

The other birds seemed to stop singing and listen to him—I wonder if he was “Mysterious Stranger” to them or some old friend or ancient enemy paying them a flying visit for old times’ sake?

Yesterday morning he was there again—high and high in the eucalyptus, calling, calling before the morning mist was fairly cleared away.

“Happy, happy days,” he cried gayly, “happy d-a-y-s!”

“Come,” said I to the Brown Girl whose black eyes, soft and brilliant and clear as a brown pool in the deep forest, can see farther than any pair of human eyes I ever knew.

Light-footed, swift and silent as was her grandmother, the Cherokee—the Brown Girl came and stood in the porch and watched and watched.

But even she could not catch sight of him—though he called louder than ever and again appeared to be laughing at some huge joke all his own.

The Brown Girl leaned against the rail of the porch and her many beads chimed together like the voice of quick waters running over the stones.

“Passin’ through,” said the Brown Girl, half to herself and half to me. “Just passin’ through—that’s all.”

And so we’ve named him now, the Mysterious Stranger, Passin’ Through—but we do not know who he is or where he came from or whither he is bound; we don’t even know how he looks or what his real name is in the bird book—all we know is that from some aerial height he spied our little garden and chose to rest here for a while—on his way.

How does he know where he is going, anyway; who drew the map of his course for him, who told him to turn here and vary there and rise at such a time and descend at another?

Does the whole country lie beneath him like a map and does he spy out rivers and towns and mountains—can he hear the calling of the wild sea up there and steer his course by it?

What a miracle it is, the migration of the birds—and yet we are so used to it we never even

notice it to comment on its wonder and on its mystery.

The other day out on the edge of the little fountain there perched all at once a wee brown bird—a cozy, comfortable, motherly, friendly, soft creature—and when she began to sing we knew her name, for she said it over and over as if she were trying to introduce herself.

“Phoebe, Phoebe,” said the little brown bird—and the children next door laughed aloud and called to each other “Phoebe’s here for a day or so.”

And those same children and any one of the rest of us would spend a precious hour almost any time standing among the dupes to watch some trickster perform some “mystery,” and think ourselves wise and deep—to wonder and speculate and try to guess how the magic was wrought.

Yet all around us every day are the great miracles of life, and of death, and of love, and of faith, and of loyalty that no time and no space and no absence can ever change.



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Happy, Happy days—good luck to you  
Passin' Through, whoever you are and wher-  
ever you came from and wherever you are going.

Perhaps your brother or your cousin or even  
the wife that is to be of your winged bosom, sings  
your gay song of challenge and of cheer over  
some low grave in Flanders this very day.

And maybe some American, homesick and  
lonely for his native sights and sounds, will hear  
the song from his hospital cot, or from his tent  
in camp, and smile and think cheerfully of home  
and those who love him here.

## OHI PROMISE ME.

I knew a little tree once, a cypress it was.

Slender and dark and straight, like an Indian youth, and it grew in a little sunny garden here in San Francisco.

He planted it, the little boy who was the beat of our hearts. And because we got it down the coast, in the place of the mysterious trees, he called it "Monterey."

He planted it on his birthday, and every morning he watered it, and every Saturday he measured its growth with his hand and was a little wistful when he found that the tree grew faster than he.

But the house with the sunny garden was old and a new one was built and those who moved into the new house took "Monterey" with them. Something happened in the moving, and although the tree was carefully replanted it did not thrive.

The dark foliage faded and the tree began to droop.

The little boy could not bear to see this and every night after he had watered the trees and his bedtime came he slipped to his knees and

prayed for "Monterey" to live and keep on growing with him. For, after all, he was a very little boy and he loved the tree very dearly.

But one day the gardener said: "Why not dig up this old tree—it is dead?"

And so it was. There was no longer any use of denying it. But the little boy grieved and begged them to give "Monterey" a chance. And the wind blew chill out of the fog, and the little boy drooped and smiled and said "Good-bye" and when he was gone the new house was empty.

Strangers who came to live there dug up "Monterey" and threw the dead trunk and lifeless branches on a bonfire.

But those whose hearts ached with loneliness went down the coast to the country of mysterious trees and found a brother to "Monterey" and planted it at the head of a little grave.

This tree did not die—it grows and grows, tall and slender, and dark, like an Indian youth.

The white rose that blossoms on the cross that marks the resting place of the dear, dear little boy is sweet and fair, and the violets which bloom

there in the season are fragrant and lovely to see, but the dark tree is the best beloved of all.

It grows and grows and seems, somehow, to remember.

What tree do you remember, in all your life, the best?

There were two great maples in the yard when I was a little girl. They were landmarks for all the countryside, but to me they were just the place where my brother hung my swing.

There are two great cottonwoods that whisper, night and day, in a certain place I know, far from here. And up in the high Sierras there is a tall sugar pine.

Oh, I would know it in a grove of a thousand brothers. I could find it, although I walked blindfolded in the snow to do it. And in my landscape today there is old "King Lear," the eucalyptus, that has stormed it through the years, and lives and triumphs still—what tree do you think of when your heart is light or when your heart is sad?

The heart of a man, the soul of a woman, the love of a little child.

The perfume of a dear and intimate garden,  
rising in the moonlight.

The sound of clear water rushing over the  
rocks.

The whispering of the wind in the leaves, and  
the silent companionship of noble trees.

If you have known these things, you have  
known the best of life.

What an inspiration it was—this idea of the  
Heroes' Grove we put into living execution here  
in San Francisco today.

Monuments—the world is full of them—the  
Tag Mahal, the Tomb of Napoleon; and in an-  
other sense, that strange and touching shaft  
erected to the woman of genius whose stormy  
heart knew deep sorrow—just a plain shaft with  
a finger pointing upwards, and the inscription  
“Thou Knowest.”

The stone Will Davis set up to his wife, Jessie  
Bartlett Davis, who sang in “Robin Hood.”  
Nothing inscribed there but the beginning of the  
song she melted into our very hearts in her  
day:

“Oh, promise me that some day you and I”—

A thousand ideas expressed in a thousand ways, yearning, loving, remembering—but what can tell it all, the pride, the grief, the memory—like a noble tree?

The Grove of the Hero—what a glorious privilege to be one of those who sees the beginning of it today, here in our beloved city of Smiles and Tears—and Memories.

## ROMANCE.

“Oh, ”said the little mermaid, and she rose out of the deep, blue sea, and rocked in the cradle of the waves, and sang for joy.”

“ ‘Pieces of eight—pieces of eight!’ screamed the parrot.”

“And there on the ground behind the rocks they lay—Davy Balfour and Allen Breck, and all the world was red with the scarlet coats of British soldiers.”

“Lorna Doone’s eyes were like stars and her hair was black satin, and great John Ridd’s heart turned to water when he looked at her.”

Every week in the year is Children’s Book Week with me.

How do people live—who don’t love to read? I wonder, don’t you?

What a little, narrow, hopeless kind of world it must be when you have to live all the time with just the everyday people you meet, going down Market street or up Powell—or the same kind you are yourself, with your same kind of prejudices and your same kind of limitations and your

same kind of hopes and fears and funny little ambitions.

Every once in a while, when I am so tired of thinking just exactly what I ought to think that I feel as if I were turning into a beet or a cabbage or something, I step to the bookcase, take down a book—and lo, the quiet room where I sit broadens at once to a great, broad moor—and I hide with Davy Balfour and run away with Allen Breck, and catch the gleam of the sunlight upon sharp swords—and for me, the wild sea breaks on Scotland's bleak shores and in my ears rings the old song of "Over the water to Charlie"—'tis a brave song and one well worth singing, mark me that.

Or if my fancy turns in another direction, I sit with Lorna Doone on the edge of the falling water and watch John Ridd come struggling up the waterfall, with something for me in his great brown hands.

Or perhaps, I take the road, the broad highway, and go swaggering down it with Dennis of Burgundy, just to laugh aloud at his old battle cry: "Courage, my comrade, the devil is dead."



Minnehaha is a fine companion of a fall evening by the light of a leaping fire. She tells me all about the painted children of the forest and how they live and love and hope and pray.

How about Pip? Last night I heard the guns at the fort or over at Alcatraz—I could not tell which—and we looked at each other and said: “Is it a prisoner escaping from the island?” And then we took down “Great Expectations” from the shelf and read how the little, frightened boy met the convict stumbling up out of the mist on the English marshes, and how he promised to bring him by the first flash of dawn a file to loose the tyranny of the iron on his limping leg, and a pork pie to stay his stomach.

Oh, that pork pie and the things that went with it—it made us so hungry to read of them that we made a raid on the ice chest and sat around the kitchen table and talked till midnight of our friends between the covers—all the gay, humorous, pathetic, human people that Dickens, the great magician, called into being.

I wouldn't bring up a boy without introducing him to Nicholas Nickleby and David Copperfield.

That walk of David's up to London, don't your feet ache at the very thought of it? Little Nell—poor Joe—children's books—yes, and books for grown people, too. What a sad old world it must have been before Charles Dickens lived—and understood the human heart.

If I had a boy of ten or a girl of twelve, I'd start them in with "Pip"—and I'd carry them right through every syllable of Dickens, and I'd do it to give them human sympathy and human understanding and to make them get the zest of life, and to teach them to listen to what it is the waves say—and how the wind talks down the chimney on a winter's night.

And after that, I'd take up Stevenson. A boy isn't really a boy till he's read "Treasure Island"—and then would come "Lorna Doone," and then—but who could mention even a fifth of all the wonderful books there are for children, these days?

Fairy stories—why they're a part of the sunshine and the starlight—a part of the sighing of the wind in the leaves, a part of the dew and the freshness of the morning.

What would you give to feel just once again the thrill that shook you from head to foot when you crept softly to the window of a moonlight night and held your breath while you looked to see if you couldn't catch the fairies dancing in the little toadstool ring—you knew they danced there for there were the toadstools, as plain as plain, and everybody knows what toadstools mean—oh, if you could only catch the little fiddler in his green coat and snatch his scarlet cap from off his head, and be invisible whenever you wanted to be.

Those great stones in the garden—if you could only lift one of them, you knew you'd find a broad stair leading down and down.

Children's books—why they are the pass-word into the world of imagination. What poor, little, starved minds they have—the children who have never learned the secret of the magic pass-word into the world of books.

## MY NEIGHBOR HAS GONE AWAY.

There's a wreath of pink roses on my neighbor's door today.

And in the light breeze that tops the hill there's a flutter of rose colored tulle—and so I know that my neighbor has gone away and that I shall never see her again.

I did not know her at all—not to speak to her.

But I saw her going in and out of her pretty home, and sometimes I heard her voice and her laughter in her beautiful garden.

We both looked every morning out on the splendor of the bay, now silver like a gleaming shield and now as blue as a wreath of violets, and again veiled in soft mist of hyacinth and pearl.

We both saw the tall ships sailing proudly out to the Gate and from the windows of her house, as well as from mine, we could watch the clouds form on old Tamalpais and float down into the valleys below like a calm and soothing message from above.

Telegraph Hill was ours together—too—and the gleaming, flashing light on Alcatraz—and in

the spring when the white jasmine stars the old wall of the Carmelite convent on the corner, the perfume of it drifted first into her garden and then down the hill to mine.

The new lights that shine from the top of the island of Yerba Buena cast their reflection over the hill alike for us both, and when the sun set in the west from her garden she must have seen the strange afterglow that bathed all the glory of the city and that made the houses at the top of Russian Hill look like castles in some ancient fairy tale.

The brown and yellow butterflies and the gay little humming birds that were like living jewels winged in gauze came from her garden into mine and flew back again across the wall in friendly fashion, and sometimes the birds drank from her bird fountain, and sometimes they chose to slake their thirst in the little drinking place we've made for them in our smaller and more unpretentious little garden—and the winds sang in from the sea, and from below the songs of the brown fisherman rose from the low wharf, and all of us in

the favored neighborhood could listen and be glad.

But my neighbor and I never leaned across the garden wall and talked of these things together.

You see, we had never been introduced, and, of course, it wouldn't have done—would it?

And yet so often I've wondered about her—what sort of thoughts she had and whether she loved the world and the beauty of it, or whether she was sometimes like some of the rest of us, a little tired, and would be glad, or at least not sorry, when the message came for her to lay down whatever work it was she chose to do, and go away on a long, long journey—all alone.

And now she's gone, and I can never ask her, can I?

And if she had any pain or suffering, as who of us has not, in some fashion or other, I can not do my humble best to help her a little.

I wonder if she knew she was going away, and if she was afraid—just a little.

It is such a strange journey we must all take into the dark, so mysterious, so unknown—does

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any one of us face it with quite a courageous and dauntless heart?

Once when I was very ill and they all thought I was not going to get well, I heard, somehow, something that was like the rushing of a great river.

Wild and stormy, yet steady and resistless, it rose and swept by close, ah, close at hand.

Sometimes it was nearer—and I could almost feel the fleck of the foam of it upon my face.

Sometimes it was not so loud, and then the nurse and the doctor smiled at each other, and one morning I awoke and I had not heard the river rushing by all night—and I knew I was not going away—just yet.

And I didn't know just then whether I was glad or sorry.

I wonder if my neighbor heard the river go rushing by, and if she knew what it meant when she heard it.

This morning there was a letter in the mail from a prisoner who is locked up in a cell in a great and frowning prison.

He has done wrong and he deserves his prison—but somehow I'm very sorry for him, and I wish there was some way I could help to let him out and make him once again—free.

How many of us are that, I wonder—really free?

Are we not all prisoners of some sort—prisoners of prejudice, prisoners of habit, prisoners of bitterness, prisoners of limitation—we live so close together, we human beings, poor, foolish, vain creatures that we are, and all the time we are so far, so cruelly far apart.

Where is my beautiful neighbor today, I wonder—the woman with the garden and the flowers and the splendid view?

Do we look to her, all of us, like prisoners shut up in the relentless confinement, not only of the human body, but of the human mind, and does she smile to feel herself at last—quite free?

How strange it all is—this little, mixed, muddled, confused life we lead here in this mixed, muddled and confused world. Will there come a day to each of us when it will all straighten out and be clear and plain and easy to understand,



and will we be amazed when we remember how blind and how dumb and how helpless we all allowed ourselves to be?

My neighbor has gone away—on a long, long journey.

I wish I had had a chance to say goodbye to her across the garden wall—before she went.

## YOUR DAY AND HIS.

Poor Soul and Careless Love have gone to live in a brand new house, built in the age-old fashion for their kind.

It's little, with a pointed roof, the new house, and it stands high on a tall pole in a quiet nook in the garden, and it has doors and windows just like a "sure-nuff" grown up house for "sure-nuff" grown up people. And there's a little balcony, if you please, and a tiny pergola, and right above the little new house sways the eucalyptus and below is a little garden of the old fashioned verbenas and phlox and fragrant mignonette—and altogether you'd think it was an ideal home—but, dear me, they don't want an ideal home at all—Poor Soul and Careless Love—they're modern, hopelessly modern, if they are just a pair of ring doves—"cushat dooes," they call them in the land o' the leal, across the water.

There were four of them to begin with—So Long and Oo Long were the other pair, but they lived up to their name and flew away, and far and far—but Poor Soul didn't fly away. She and her little mate, Careless Love, were quite

contented in the garden and they crooned and cooed and poor-oored and preened and strutted in quite the ring-dove fashion. And so the new house was made for them and painted and trimmed and into it they moved—as pleased as pigeons—and by and by, one morning, sure enough there was an egg, and the next day or so, another egg. But Poor Soul didn't pay the faintest attention to them. She wouldn't even look at the nest that Carless Love had worked so faithfully to help her to make. And there they sit on their little balcony this very minute, poor-ooing and cooing like a dozen Irving Berlins in a brand new ragtime dove song. And the eggs are broken and there isn't going to be any little family in the dovecote—after all.

And that isn't the worst of it. They've set a bad example, and what do you think? The canaries have gone out on strike and won't look at each other and I believe that Rin-tintin would sue for divorce this minute if he knew just how to go about it. And it's my private opinion that his mate, Oh-By-Jingo, has ideas of her own

about economic independence and alimony, and all the rest of it.

Rin-tintin is a widower. His mate was called Ninette, and what a gay little creature she was, but very domestic, too. She brought up her children in the finest canary bird fashion, but when she died and Oh-By-Jingo came to take her place all was not well in the canary cage.

Rin-tintin likes his bath and plenty of it in the morning.

Oh-By-Jingo wants hers at night, and she wouldn't mind in the least if she didn't have any at all. Rin-tintin likes pears; Oh-By-Jingo has a fancy for apples and you can hear them arguing about it the minute the sun begins to shine through the weeping willow tree and tinges the scented jasmine with scarlet and gold.

Whatever is the matter in the little garden? Is there no place in the world quiet enough and remote enough to keep out the modern spirit of restless discontent? How foolish you are, Poor Soul, to let those eggs get cold. Don't you know that some day you'll wish there were some little Poor Souls and Careless Loves in the dovecote?

Wouldn't you like to teach them to fly, high and high, almost to the very clouds, and to come circling home again at nightfall?

Won't you ever get tired of just yourself and the pretty colors on your breast, and the graceful turn of your own head?

Fy, fy, Oh-By-Jingo, why are you so difficult and hard to please? Rin-tintin is a very good looking fellow, well preserved, too, for his years. Don't waste your time dreaming of impossible Romeos in impossible feathers of gold. Make up your mind to your lot. See how white the bells are hanging from the datura tree. How sweet the air is. Look, there's the blue bay beyond. There's a good deal to talk about besides the proper time for a bath, and which is the best for the voice—a bit of apple or a slice of pear.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—hark, how the clock ticks in the house there. See how the sun wheels down the sky. It will soon be over, your little day, and his—ah, soon—why not make the best of it while it lasts?

The best of it in the old simple fashion of love and home and children—of memory and of kindly friendship, too.

## THE MUSIC OF THE RAIN.

“Hear the music of the rain on the roof and windowpane—falling down, falling down!”

Wasn't it glorious again after the long, sweet truce of sunshine and almost summer heat?

Don Caesar de Bazan thinks so, and so does Lorna Doone. Who are they? Why, bless you, the trees in the garden, who else?

Don Caesar is the tall eucalyptus that stands and flourishes his myriad swords and makes them glitter in the light as if he defied all the world of trees to match him and them.

Lorna Doone, who should she be but the willow, pray, the weeping willow, all soft curls and tender tendrils, and airs and graces, but something sweet and gentle about her, too. And, oh, how the yellow acacia, the one we call Mistress Peggy, plumed herself and shook out her garments, and promised a cloud of primrose perfume in a day or so if these showers kept up. A fine rain, a glorious rain, and well apportioned, not sogging along all through the day, but rushing in at nightfall like a favorite guest sure of a rousing welcome.

Was it your good fortune to be abroad late on Saturday afternoon homecoming from down the peninsula? It was mine, and that home-coming was worth a roll of bills or stack of silver a foot high, as far as joy and the zest of living is concerned. Up the street of the Ragged Kings—that's what they'd call that eucalyptus highway if they had it in Andalusia, where the names of things spring from the heart of the people. They say some there are who want to cut down that splendid procession of ragged grandeur and plant some neat, seemly tree to be more conventional. Away with them to the deepest dungeon!

Up and up, through the miles of violets, with round-faced girls and chubby boys standing by the highway vending sentiment and memory and sweet breath of old mother earth at 10 cents a bunch. You pay \$2 for that many violets in New York now and don't get them half so sweet, or anything like so fresh. Zim a zim, up past the golf links, with the players coming reluctantly in from the Lakeside course, the most beautiful links in the world, they say, who should know, as

if they hated to leave the breath and the open and the broad green sweep of the fields and the cuddling close of the hills and the vigor and the beauty of it all, rain or no rain.

Hola here's the wind, sweeping in from the sea. Tie your veil tight. No ordinary knot will do in this breeze.

Hurrah, see the trees bend before it.

Zim, whiz, up like a homecoming eagle to the town.

Hurrah, the sea! How the white horses of the surf trample and rear! Look, the gulls are flying over the city, a sure sign of a storm, they say. There's the Cliff House, forlorn it is to see it silent and dark after so many years of jovial life.

Hurrah, the great windmills along the beach, a fine night for them. They know what they were born for now, be sure of that. Turn sails and creak, old sinews of the wooden frame, this is your hour of use and homely faring. The park green and fair! What a park it is, to be sure, none like it on this earth, I do believe. Is it possible that it was once a wind-swept sand dune, and that not so many years ago? The Panhan-



dle—what glorious trees—the town alight and a gleam. Van Ness avenue—what a street of dignity and perspective.

Some day when we plant some trees along it, either side, we'll have such a boulevard as all the world can never match. Not the Marina tonight. The storm rides too fast in the wild sky and we must make haste home.

Zim a zim, up the hill.

There's Alcatraz, ablaze with the welcoming eye of a devoted friend. Hurrah, home, and the first big drops splashing the pavement.

What a fire on the hearth, lamb chops for dinner, baked potatoes, too, and a crisp salad and a bit of good cheese with a cup of real coffee for a farewell kiss. What a dinner for a stormy night. Clear the cloth, light the shaded lamp, gather round the hearth. Now for an hour with Bold Barnaby on the wild downs of England—in the storm.

Sleep, sweet, dear heart, there in the folding dark, where fresh wreaths lie in memory of the Day of All Souls. Sleep, sweet. Our deepest memories are with you in the storm.

## GONE—WHERE?

The cage is opened—and the bird is gone.

And we are all a little lonely at our house on the side of the hill, with the red and yellow Milliner's Flower trying to pretend that it is still summer all along the edge of the porch and the little red and yellow button chrysanthemums making a gay show of themselves along the garden wall.

I never cared much for birds in a cage, somehow.

They always seemed to me such poor, artificial, lonely, wistful things—always fluttering their poor useless wings and trying to act like real birds when all the time they are just forlorn prisoners, kept for the vagrant fancy and the passing whim of the one who hangs up the cage and expects the little feathered exile from sunlight and freedom to say: "Tweet"—whenever "tweet" is supposed to be the thing.

But, somehow, this little fellow was different.

I suppose they are all "different" to someone, when you come down to that.

Hal was a present; he was given to us by someone who likes birds and loves dogs and is even fond of sly, hypocritical, elegant and pharasaical cats.

We named him after a soldier boy, who wrote to us from a hospital in France—such a cheery letter, so full of courage and hope and gay good will to all the world. And little Hal proved worthy of his namesake.

He was a canary, as yellow as a golden poppy, A bright spot of light in the room, and, oh, how he could sing, and how he did sing.

In the morning, when we took his gay little red and white cage out and hung it in the sun Hal fairly burst his throat telling all the neighbors that he was out on the porch.

He swung back and forth on his perch, like a regular acrobat. He laughed, oh, yes, he did, and he said "Hurrah for me," too,—you could hear him just as plain. That's when he first came.

But after a while, when the birds in the garden began to answer him, Hal didn't quite know what to make of it.

The robins, yes, there were a few of them once in awhile, and the finch and the little twittering sparrows—these he seemed to feel were his friends and he answered them quite merrily, after the fashion of the born good fellow the world over.

But the little brown bird who came late in the summer and called and called, all day long, high and clear and sweet: “Here I be”—that was something that Hal didn’t exactly know how to understand. Every time little “Here I Be” spoke up Hal put his head on one side and listened, and sometimes we thought he tried to answer back “Here I Be.”

One morning he did not answer. And when we went out to see what was the matter the door of the cage was open and little Hal was gone.

We looked and looked and finally we found him—high up in the weeping willow tree. How did he ever learn to fly, I wonder? And though we coaxed and called and hung his cage close by him on the tree, he would not listen and in the morning he was quite gone.

I hope he's happy somewhere, poor little Hal. I hope some of his bird friends will show him where to go for water and how to find his food. It's selfish to wish he was back in his little cage, isn't it—with all the blue sky and the bright sunshine and the rustling leaves and the calling winds and the sweet sound of the sea upon the sand for his?

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The little boy who lived with us in our little home is gone, too, and it is very lonely in our hearts without him.

How selfish it is to wish to bring him back and lock up the eager brightness of his joyous soul in that restricted cage we call the human body.

Fly on, free spirit. Do not linger here to share with us our sorrows and our grief, our little earthly hopes and fears and anxieties and disappointments.

The door of the cage was opened for you. And we that love you would not for anything call you back and lock you up in it—again.

## GOODBYE, SWEET DAY.

Grapes, pears, apples, prunes, red leaves and yellow, vines scarlet and crimson—pink hills crowned with purple eucalyptus, pine and cedar, green and green—purple prunes drying by the millions in the orchard on the ground under the rich trees!

White grapes, amber grapes, black grapes—apples, red and yellow and green, huge ones that are like the pictures you used to see in the seed catalogues.

Tomatoes as red as the apple Paris gave to Helen of Troy—millions of them, miles of them. Corn yellowing in the tassel—the whole air fragrant with fruit and rich with the perfume of such a marvelous plenty as has never been seen before, even here in California—that's a Sunday in the country almost anywhere right outside of San Francisco today.

Nobody would believe it who hasn't seen it—the richness, the variety, the gorgeous generosity of it all. And the colors; they are like something a really poetic futurist might imagine and try to put on canvas.

If he did put them into a picture nobody would believe him, not even those who have seen the pink and purple hills and the yellow and scarlet of the grape vines that make the fields and the valleys and the hillsides look like gigantic pieces of some strange and rich embroidery.

Even when you are looking at such a landscape it's hard to believe it is true.

The full flavor, the careless plenty, the gorgeous color laid shade upon shade—it's almost past credence. Yet there it is, for us of blessed inheritance to see and to smell and to taste and to be grateful for—and at the end of the trip the blue bay of San Francisco, flecked as with foam with the white yachts and the funny little cozy houseboats.

And then sunset—with all the windows of the city aflame, and Alcatraz illuminated as if for the feast of some mighty potentate, every window ablaze. The sun crimson and glorious sinking into a sea as blue as any sapphire ever set in diamonds for the delight of any queen.

What a season, what a country—no wonder the boats are jammed with motor cars, no wonder

that to come up the peninsula these days at the week-end you must join a procession and be one of a parade.

The Yerba Buena is drying in the autumn sunlight. Was there ever anything so sweet on earth as the perfume of it? Melt that with the fragrance of a million acres of grapes and countless miles of apples and prunes and pears—and you swing a censor of odorous delight such as no high priest ever swung before any altar built by man.

Sonoma, Napa, Marin—any one of these counties a paradise of autumnal harvest.

I saw some strawberries Saturday that came from a little half-acre that has brought its owner just exactly five hundred dollars in cool cash. Not so bad for a half-acre, is it?

And he didn't have to do the picking, either.

Napa is giving a fair this week. Sebastopol will have a show of apples, such apples as Eve never even dreamed of—raisins, figs, walnuts, almonds, olives—though the olives didn't do very well this year.

If you feel stingy and small and grudgy and



envious of any man that lives, get a day off and run up or down or over into any of the great fruit counties and you will feel as rich as Croesus—for at least a week.

Up in Sonoma yesterday I saw a little blue-eyed girl holding a cosset lamb in her arms and by her side ran a little boy. He held in his two chubby fists a great bunch of gorgeous flaming Tokays, the prettiest things that were ever grown on any bush, tree, shrub or vine on earth. He held them to the light and watched the glowing colors deepen and glow—then with a sudden little cry of childish ecstasy he laid his sunburned cheek to the grapes in an overwhelming impulse of love and gratitude and appreciation.

I knew just how he felt. I would have liked to gather the whole perfume and beauty and generosity of the California day into my arms as a mother gathers her beloved child, and hold it for my own forever.

Goodbye, sweet day, farewell, oh, hours of golden fruitage and splendid harvest. Now that I have felt the savor of even just a few such hours I have not lived in vain.

## THE GREY VEIL

The other day it rained, and rained, and rained some more. There was nothing to read, and the dog wasn't well and kept shivering, and the cat had a big tail and shut its eyes to slits, and looked as if she'd love to turn into a tiger and show us a few things.

The postman didn't bring a letter, and something happened to the cream, and the coffee wasn't quite right.

"When would school ever open?" I asked the Middling.

"Is the world really going to the dogs?" said the Sweetest Aunt in the world. "Hats are too dear for words, and as for winter coats!"—this from the Pretty Maid.

It was a rather tiresome, wet, slushy world, all round, and all at once there came to me, unexpectedly, a veil.

Just a soft, fine, altogether beautiful grey veil, the very kind I'd been looking for and never could find—a pearl grey, like the inside of a shell before the pink begins, the mist grey of dawn, with a hint of the sunrise behind it.

Clouds, sweet fragrant mist, the spray of the sea, yes, that's what that grey meant, and a friend had seen it, and she thought of me, and bought it, and sent it for an "unbirthday present," and it illumined the day like a burst of sunshine streaming on a yellow acacia in full and fragrant bloom.

How did she happen to do it, I wonder?

Did she notice that I was a little depressed the other day when I met her, and did she send the veil to say "never mind, I like you anyhow, if nobody else does?"

Or was she just in one of her generous, expensive moods when she had to give something nice to somebody or die on the spot of a rush of kindness to the heart?

I've seen her go into her kitchen and bake a dozen pies in a mood like that, and run all over the neighborhood giving them away.

I've seen her call from her garden to a blind man who passes sometimes, and ask him what he thought of the peace terms, just to show him that she knew him and wanted to talk to him.

Dogs? Why, she can't let a dog go by without a kind word, and as for children, every child in the neighborhood knows just how her cookies taste, and what she heard from Ambrose, the tall boy who is up at Camp Lewis, as cross as two sticks because he isn't going to France after all.

Yet he is almost tickled to death to think that he's coming back to the hill soon.

And if there's any one ill, or in trouble, she always knows it, my neighbor of the grey veil, and she's there with a kind word and at exactly the right time, and a cup of cocoa or a bowl of soup.

When the three pretty girls and their mother next door had the "flu" who nursed them but the good lady of the grey veil?

And there they are, all together in their pretty homes, cuddled close like a litter of kittens, all friendly, all loving, all happy, my neighbor of the veil and her sisters. I wonder if they have the least idea what they, and such as they, mean to this lonesome, preoccupied, busy old world of ours?

Soldiers, why, the hill is brown with them, coming and going to the house of my neighbor

of the grey veil. They all call her "Ma," and she calls them "son," and never a whimper about her own boy, so far away, never a moan from her own anxious heart. Instead:

"When did you hear from home? Won't mother be proud when you get there?"

All the wounded men know their way to the doorstep, and are comforted and cosseted and scolded and mothered. Oh, neighbor of the grey veil, I wish the world was full of your kind!

Maybe we'd all have gentle sisters-in-law, with big blue eyes and kind hearts, and kindly cousins, a house full of them, whenever we wanted them, and plenty to eat for all the world, and no hungry people anywhere, and no lonely little neglected children.

But till that time comes I'm going to take a lesson from you, neighbor of the grey veil.

I'm going to find my joy in the little, homely, kindly, friendly things. The flowers that grow by the wall, the trees that are so kindly with their shade and their fluttering leaves, like hands of friends waving to us.

And the children, and the wind that blows, and the rain that falls, and all that is good and natural and real, and forget all that is artificial and cold and calculating.

Salute, neighbor of the grey veil, you're a real missionary—did you know it?

(1918)

## THE LITTLE BOY IN THE GARDEN.

(1918)

Such a dear little boy.

Such a chubby little roly-poly little, naughty little, good little boy.

His face is as round as an apple and so are his eyes—and sometimes the eyes are full of dreams, and sometimes they dance with mischief. And he has a “cowlick” that won’t stay combed and a mouthful of white teeth and red cheeks and sturdy, broad shoulders and chubby hands.

And he hates to wash those hands and he can’t for the life of him see why people make such a fuss about perfectly silly things like ears and the back of your neck and just the tiniest hole in the knee of your stocking—not a bit bigger than the palm of your hand, or, well, maybe the palm of both hands. But who’s ever going to stop to notice that?

And he likes to play “One Old Cat,” and “Andy Andy Over,” and he loves to shoot marbles and he wouldn’t carry those marbles in the neat bag that his mother made for him for that

purpose—oh, not for anything. Nobody but “sissie” and “Mama’s pets” carry marbles in a bag. And some day, when he grows up, he’s going to be an aviator and fly and fly—way over the sea and across the world to Africa, where the black people live and where the camels are just swell—and to Asia to see the white peacocks and hear them cry in the moonlight, and to South America to find diamonds—and his mother’s going with him. Of course, he isn’t telling any of the kids about that.

He didn’t plan to take her at first, but there was something in her eyes when he told her, and he just threw his arms around her neck and whispered in his ridiculous, husky whisper that’s louder than any speaking voice you ever heard, and said: “You, too. You’re coming, too, mother.”

And that’s a secret between them, and sometimes when the aeroplanes fly very low over the little house where the dear little boy lives with his mother she looks up and watches them and makes big eyes and looks frightened. And no matter what the little boy is doing he runs to her



side and manages to touch her as he passes and his clear eyes are full of laughing mischief and deep, deep love.

Sometimes, on cloudy days, the little boy plays in the basement and makes little aeroplanes of his own out of paper and wood—such neat, well made little things they are—so ship-shape and workmanlike—it looks almost as if they really could fly.

On sunny days he plays in the garden a good deal when he's not out with "the kids."

It is a large garden, full of old fashioned flowers, roses and phlox and fuchsias and nasturtiums and jasmine and in one corner there's a bed of mignonette and pink and white and red verbenas. And there's a little summer house in the corner of the garden—a pergola, they call it these days. But it is a summer house just the same, with a rough floor and a lattice and vines and a view. And sometimes the little boy plays there for hours, climbing the lattice sturdily, leaning out over the fence and watching oh, so intently, some ship in the bay below.

When he does that his mother knows that he isn't a little boy at all. He's a sea captain in charge of a great ship, plowing the mighty deep, and there are pirates abroad and the captain is up night and day watching for them with tireless vigilance.

The rough haired sheep dog is with him many times. He never barks at the little boy as he does at other people—the sheep dog. He just lies down and looks at him affectionately and wags his tail and lifts his ears as if he were listening for some mysterious call from some mysterious master far away.

And the strangest part of it all is that nobody ever sees the little boy any more—nobody but his mother, for he is gone on a long, long journey, so people think.

But she knows better. Ah, how well she knows, how much better.

And when people say to her, "Isn't it lonely here in the garden without the little boy?" the little boy's mother smiles and says very quietly:

“No, not so lonely as you would think.”

And the rough English sheep dog comes and lays his head upon her knees and from far down in the garden the little boy's mother hears a sweet, clear voice singing the gay little song the little boy used to sing when other people could see him. And then people wonder that she likes to be alone in the garden sometimes and is never lonely there.

## ITALY IN SAN FRANCISCO.

Francesca, Beatrice, Giuseppe, Guido and Garibaldi were all at the Fiesta in Washington Park last night.

So was grandma—and grandpa and Uncle Batiste and Great-Aunt Bianchi.

And the Bacigalupis and the Podestas and the Onestis and all the rest of the Italians of San Francisco, whether they are rich and have gone down the peninsula and built themselves magnificent homes with terraces that make you think of the Borghesi gardens in Rome, or whether they are bankers who prefer to live in town in grand houses as much like marble as possible, or whether they are the plain, every-day Italians who make North Beach the most interesting and picturesque part of San Francisco.

If you have not been to the Fiesta in Washington Square yet, then you do not know what a fiesta is and can be.

I used to think that the only difference between a fiesta and a fete, and a fair was the way they were spelled—spend five minutes at the Italian

fiesta tonight and you'll never linger under that delusion again as long as you live.

A fair comes from England and it is a decorous, perfectly respectable and rather dull affair by the time we Americans put the last touch of Yankee expression into it.

The fiesta is as Latin as its name, and as full of fun as a healthy three-year-old boy with a brand new pair of skates and a three-months-old puppy for a birthday present.

People laugh at a fiesta—they only smile at a fair.

They sing at a fiesta, too, and nobody has to work like a slave trying to make them do it.

When you go to a fiesta you don't leave the children at home with the maid—bless you, no, you take the children along and the maid, too, and the maid's cousin up from the ranch at Fresno; and the Aunt Bianca down from the ranch in Sonoma, and there's eating and drinking and toasting and dancing, and always, and always there is light-hearted calling from one booth to another and racing from one place to

another and pushing and shouting—never such a good-natured crowd.

Fishermen from the wharf, workmen from the shipyard, belles from lower Lombard street and Green and Vallejo. Black-eyed beauties in purple and lavender after the immemorial fancy of their race. White teeth, quick smiles, supple wrists—how plain and stiff and stupid we Americans do seem in contrast.

Even the old Satyr who sits contemplating himself by sunny day and by starry night at the round pool in the three-cornered park in Columbus avenue was en fete—last night. Some one had put a wreath of French marigold around his head, and not one child went past him in all that laughing throng who did not see and mark, with a gay cry of salutation—the decoration.

Lights, music, laughter, friend calling to friend, Napoli saluting Firenze, and Milano waving a gay greeting to Roma, for was not this a celebration in honor of the unification of Italy?

Italy the free, Italy the inspired, Italy the beautiful, Italy the magnificent—Italy the cradle of the culture of the world.

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**THE BIRDS' SONG.**

We sat in the curve of the porch, as a child sits in the curve of a protecting arm—a little group of us from San Francisco—the other day.

The eucalyptus on the ridge back of the house made a screen of green lace between us and the sky.

The hills glowed like copper in the flooding sunshine. Old Tamalpais brooded in his purple cloak, and down below, in the valley, the little village lay like a pearl in the shell, lambent and full of changing lights, in the soft radiance of the setting sun.

*Bancroft Library*

Of many things we talked, as friends do when they gather for a little space, away from the every-day concerns of life, of dreams, and how they come true; of visions, and how they fade; of fortunes—told, and in the telling—and the strange freaks of Fate, the fortune teller; of old friends and new ones; of old poems; of old songs; of haunting refrains; and one told how her garden grew, and one what she did in the East this summer, now so lately passed, and how glad she was to get home again to California.

And one will soon adventure on strange seas. I wonder when she will return, and how?

Old houses we talked of, and the people who built them, and those who came and lived in them. Brides we discussed, and their veils, and their wedding wreaths. Mothers-in-law in general, and in particular,—these, too, came in for their share of attention.

And then a little woman, with a gay, laughing face, and a pair of dreaming eyes that do not laugh, not even through their tears (was it the tears held back that made them shine so, those soft, mysterious eyes?)—spoke.

“Birds are queer things,” she said. “No, I don’t mean parrots and canaries, and things you keep in a cage. I mean real birds, that live in the real outdoors.”

“Have you ever listened to them, early, early, just in that still, silvery hush that comes before the dawn? I heard one the other morning, right outside the window, and what do you think he said, just as plain as plain could be?

“‘Mary’—just like that.

“‘Mary,’ as though he were calling someone.



“It was startling. I sat up in bed and listened to him. ‘Mary,’ he said. ‘Mary,’ so lonesome and sort of wistful.

“My husband laughed, when I told him, but afterward he heard it too.

“And in the evening, just before sunset, when the little wind begins to blow, he comes and sits on the tree by the window and calls.

“‘Mary,’ he says, ‘Mary.’ Sometimes it almost makes me cry.”

And we all looked at her, and at each other, and laughed.

But, when we were leaving, each of us stopped and said something very special to the woman with the gay, little face, who heard the bird call “Mary” in the silver dawn and in the rosy hour of sunset.

For Mary is the name of her daughter, who has only been married six months or so, and has gone away to live. And Mary’s mother is glad she’s married and glad she’s happy. She wouldn’t have kept her at home for anything. But, when it is very still in the world, the little bird comes and calls:

“Mary”—over and over again, in a puzzled, wistful sort of way.

Dear Mary, I wonder if that same bird will ever perch in the tree outside the window of her new home, where she is so happy with her devoted husband, and when it does, what will it say?

Will it repeat over and over, wistfully, the funny, little pet name Mary has always called her mother, ever since she was old enough to talk, and will Mary laugh to hear it—and when she laughs, will her happy eyes be full of puzzling tears?

I wonder.

## THE MESSAGE BY AIR.

(1920)

“The rose is red, the violet’s blue,  
Honey is sweet—and so are you.”

Isn’t it strange to think of them way up there in the air, the California posies. It’s on the way now, you know, in one of the airship mails—a great box full of California flowers. Gone to New York to astonish the neighbors.

I wonder what the Downtown Association people who sent the box with their compliments to New York put in it.

Dahlias, I hope. They don’t know what dahlias are, really, anywhere in the East—not compared to the great big, gorgeous, raggedy, gay colored rascals we raise here in the back yards and think nothing of it.

You couldn’t tell one of them from an imported chrysanthemum to save your life, only some of the dahlias are prettier. There’s a striped thing—red and white, as big as a dinner plate, that’s really too gay to be true. I always feel as if the florist had sat up all night painting them by hand when I see a bunch of them. And as for those gardens down the highway—talk about color

schemes—they're all color, gorgeous, rich, rioting, flaunting, eye-filling, heart-delighting color, without the hint of a "scheme" about them.

Sweet peas—I hope they slipped a few of them in, just to make the New York florists open their eyes. Why, our sweet peas are as big as any two of such blossoms anywhere else on earth, and they haven't lost a bit of their delicacy or perfume while they were growing, either. Roses—all kinds. They tell me we have a hundred and ten different varieties growing right here in the gardens of California, outdoors, with the sky and the wind and the fog for gardeners. I never could take time to count them myself. I'm always too busy being glad I'm alive when I get a glimpse of a real garden rose.

They're twelve dollars a dozen in New York, you know—the roses we clip with a pair of garden scissors and hand over the fence to the new neighbor, just for a pleasant "good morning."

Asters—I wonder if they didn't slip in a few of the gay, hopeful, joyous things. I always feel as if I heard someone singing—something with a trill in it and a lot of runs—high in a silvery soprano, whenever I see a big bunch of pink and blue and white and lavender asters.

I wish we could send some September weather by aeroplane, too, just these golden days that are ours, right now—every hour a blessing handed straight to us like a gift from a loved and loving friend. Amber days, amber and sapphire—and, oh, the starlit beauty of the blue and silver nights.

And just think—we'll have them now, right along, fairly up to Christmas, if our good old climate does the usual thing in the way of fall weather.

When they're beginning to put in the winter coal and stuff up the double windows and hunt out the winter underwear we'll be filling up the tank and starting out for a little run to the green redwoods or through the tawny fields of October California—tawny with sunshine and purple and green and white with the ripe grapes and the bursting figs and the drying plums in the orchards.

Let's put in a little of our optimism, too, in the next box of California flowers—some of our hope, some of our belief in humanity, some of our eager and earnest Americanism, some of the spirit of the old pioneer mothers—that spirit that

faced danger unafraid and knew not what it meant to cower before any living thing.

Let's tuck in a little neighborly kindness, too, and some open-hearted charity and some friendly understanding. Oh, of course, they have these things in New York—that splendid city of prideful beauty and imperial luxury. But somehow they don't have the time or the room to cultivate them as we do here.

The open hand, the generous heart, the loving sympathy of a true Californian—that heritage that is the very birthright, bred in the bone and born in the flesh of every real California man and woman. Let's send some of that, too, with our love and good wishes and many happy returns of the day to great, rich, powerful, magnificent, careless, ambitious, cold-hearted New York.

And when the message and the gift has gone—let us every one of us here in San Francisco, look out upon the blue bay and mark again with new and deep appreciation the purple splendor of our guarding mountains, and lift up our hearts in a prayer of thanksgiving that we, too, are citizens of no mean city—and let's be thankful that we are alive—in California today.



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